



ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL RENEWAL & IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TOM HORNE
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

The Arizona Department of Education is pleased to announce that the Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative (AZHSRI) is underway! To gather information about needs, opportunities, and challenges of high school improvement in Arizona, a series of Regional Focus Groups was conducted during the month of October 2004.

SUPERINTENDENT TOM HORNE:

“ It is critical that Arizona’s high school graduates be prepared for post-secondary options, which include higher education, the workplace or careers. We can improve our graduation rate and student successes by:

- providing our secondary students with rich, content based curricula which includes career and technical education and the arts;
- implementing data-driven decision making in order to improve academic achievement and to close the achievement gap;
- strengthening high school literacy;
- increasing the rigor of high school course offerings by increasing access to Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate programs;
- developing strong intervention programs to assist all students in meeting and exceeding the State’s Standards;
- disseminating and recognizing successful secondary practices and models in Arizona’s unique, diverse school environments.”

HOW AZHSRI CAME ABOUT:

October 2003: Arizona sent a team of education leaders to the U.S. Department of Education’s *High School Leadership Summit* in Washington, DC.

April 2004: The U.S. Department of Education convened a Regional Summit on high school reform in Phoenix, issuing a call to states in our region to address challenges and opportunities facing our high school students and schools. The *Arizona State Team* on high school reform met for the first time at this Summit.

July 2004: The *State Team* met to create a proactive effort to improve high school student outcomes. At this meeting, the State Team began discussing plans for the Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative (AZHSRI).

August 2004: The Arizona Department of Education received support from both the U.S. Department of Education and WestEd to convene a series of Regional Focus Groups in four locations across the states to conduct a needs assessment of key stakeholders in high school reform.

AZHSRI REGIONAL FOCUS GROUPS:

October 14-19, 2004, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) conducted with WestEd an *independent, participatory statewide needs assessment in order to better define the AZHSRI agenda*. The needs assessment took place through background research and a series of four Regional Focus Groups.

The purpose of the Regional Focus Groups was to clarify the unique Arizona context for high school renewal.



ADE invited a diverse set of approximately thirty stakeholders to the table in each of four communities across the state (Yuma, Tucson, Flagstaff, and Phoenix) to take part in the Focus Groups. Participants were asked to share perspectives on their needs and expectations related to Arizona’s high schools and high school improvement. ADE and WestEd contracted with West Wind Enterprises to help design, conduct, and report on the Regional Focus Groups. The report written after the Focus Groups detailed:

- Needs articulated in the Focus Groups;
- Ideas for renewal activities that might work in Arizona’s schools and communities; and
- Areas where groundwork must be done before actions will take hold.

West ED is a nonprofit research, development, and service agency, which operates, among numerous other programs, the federal Regional Educational Laboratory that serves the state of Arizona. www.wested.org

West Wind Enterprises is a small consulting company offering professional development and research support for state education leaders engaged in strategic planning, policy development, and stakeholder engagement.

AZHSRI

Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative



FOCUS GROUP PARTNERS:

ADE and WestEd are pleased that Arizona's various state-wide associations of education leaders are partnering on the Regional Focus Groups. Focus Group partners provided advice and support in the planning of the Focus Group sessions, as well as assistance in selecting potential Focus Group Participants. Partners in the Focus Group effort included:

Arizona Association of Student Councils
Arizona Business and Education Coalition
Arizona Charter Schools Association
Arizona Education Association
Arizona Federation of Teachers
Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center
Arizona School Administrators
Arizona School Board Association
Center for the Future of Arizona
Greater Phoenix Leadership - Education Initiative
Rodel Charitable Foundation of Arizona
State Community Colleges and Universities

AZHSRI ACTIVITIES, PHASE ONE:

Phase One: *The development of a statewide vision and action plan for high school renewal and improvement in order to raise academic achievement, increase the number of high school graduates, and increase post-secondary attendance and completion.* The action plan includes steps that we can take to foster the initiative.

October 2004:

Regional Focus Groups

December 2004:

Release of the Focus Group *Report*
State Team Meeting
USDOE High School Leadership Conference

February 2005:

Breaking Ranks II Conference
State Team Meeting

March 2005:

Dropout Prevention Conference

AZHSRI ACTIVITIES, PHASE TWO:

Phase Two: *Implementation of the statewide action plan for high school renewal and improvement!*

Spring/Summer 2005: *AZHSRI Statewide Summit*

Next Steps: *To be determined!!*

RELATED ACTIVITIES:

Fall 2004/Winter 2005:



The Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) will be conducting a series of public engagement forums around the state in the fall of 2004 and winter of 2005, in order to gather additional data and build public support for high school renewal.

February 1, 2005: The Arizona School Administrators received a *Breaking Ranks II* (BRII) grant from the National Association of Secondary School Principals to convene a BRII Summit in February 2005.

March 13 – 15, 2005: The Arizona Department of Education, in partnership with the Center for the Future of Arizona and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, will host a national dropout prevention conference. This is an opportunity for educators to expand their knowledge of issues and program strategies to increase high school graduation rates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on AZHSRI, contact **Maxine Daly, High School Renewal/Dropout Prevention Director** (mdaly@ade.az.gov) or **Dr. Karen Butterfield, Deputy Associate Superintendent and AZHSRI State Team Leader** (kbutter@ade.az.gov)

To access updated information, please visit the Arizona Department of Education's Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative website at :
<http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/AZHSRI/>

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